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AD-A276 891



1993
Executive Research Project
S6

The Future of Military Program Directors

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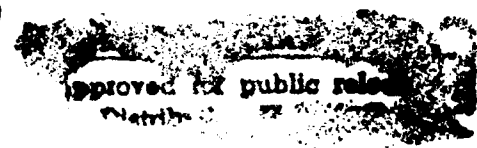
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The Industrial College of the Armed Forces
National Defense University
Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. 20319-6000

94 3 10 072

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY N/A			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE N/A					
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) NDU-ICAF-93- <i>36</i>			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) Same		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Industrial College of the Armed Forces		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) ICAF-FAP	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION National Defense University		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Fort Lesley J. McNair Washington, D.C. 20319-6000			7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Fort Lesley J. McNair Washington, D.C. 20319-6000		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
			PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.
					WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) <i>The Future of military Program Directors</i>					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) <i>Michael W. Bosen</i>					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Research		13b. TIME COVERED FROM <i>Aug 92</i> TO <i>Apr 93</i>		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) April 1993	
15. PAGE COUNT <i>55</i>					
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP			
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) SEE ATTACHED					
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Judy Clark			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (202) 475-1889		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL ICAF-FAP

THE FUTURE OF MILITARY PROGRAM DIRECTORS

LT COL MICHAEL W. BOOEN

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the future viability of the acquisition career field for active duty military officers, and seeks to educate mid level acquisition officers on all the new career requirements driven by recent regulation and legislation. The report focuses on what it takes to be a program director of a major systems program office. It first describes history, analyzing events from the Packard Commission through the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act. The report then analyzes the current status of the military acquisition career field, outlining the increasing career constraints, military program director selection procedures, and promotion potential. Finally, the report discusses the future effects of the defense drawdown and increased career specialization within the acquisition career field.

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DTIC	TAB <input type="checkbox"/>
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INTRODUCTION

So you want to be a program director? Why not. . . if you're an F-16 pilot, you want to be the Wing Commander. If you're a tank driver, you long for command of that armored brigade. And if at mid career you find yourself in the acquisition business, you no doubt aspire to be the program-director. These key full colonel/captain program director assignments are the Wing Commander and Brigade Commander equivalent jobs in the acquisition world.

As program director, you'll be responsible for billions of dollars of the taxpayers money, thousands of jobs in one or more aerospace contractors plants, and maybe even the health and well being of small cities heavily dependent on the jobs brought to town by your program. And if you have an even more ambitious goal of being a general/flag officer in the acquisition career field, experience as a program director is essentially a prerequisite.

If you are an F-16 pilot or armored officer, the career path to wing and brigade command is well established with many options and alternate routes to the top. The same was true for the acquisition career field. This paper is designed to tell you why and how this has changed! My main thesis for this paper is to show you that the military acquisition career field is in the middle of a major paradigm shift. Having been in systems acquisition my entire career, I can say with confidence that the extent, significance, and even existence of this paradigm shift is not well known out in

the field!

PURPOSE

My motivation for writing this paper is to educate mid career acquisition officers on the new path to program director and higher jobs. There are many new requirements to fulfill and constraints that will drive mid career job selection. Unfortunately there are many questions about the future viability of this career field. Rumors abound that acquisition will be civilianized. Two of my Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) classmates, both multiple below-the-zone "fast burners" from the acquisition world, opted for non acquisition joint duty rather than return to the tumultuous world of systems acquisition! Their main reason for leaving the acquisition career field is they don't believe there's a future for military officers in systems acquisition. So my secondary purpose is to convince you that the new acquisition paradigm includes a viable career path for active duty military officers. I'll tell the story in three parts:

- History of the Paradigm Shift
- Current Status of the Military Acquisition Career Field
- Future Implications for Military Program Directors

A CAVEAT ON SCOPE:

I will only discuss the active duty military side of systems acquisition. While the acquisition career paradigm shift has many exciting implications for civilians as well, the impact of the

changes on the military officer are more profound. That is not to say the majority of what I've written doesn't apply to civilian acquisition professionals. Keep in mind also that this is a view from the bottom - a view of all the new laws, regs, and implications from someone coming from the acquisition trenches.

I'll apologize in advance for using many Air Force specific examples and organization charts. However, the points made are equally applicable to the Navy, Army and Marine Corps acquisition professionals.

I. HISTORY OF THE PARADIGM SHIFT

It would be confusing to describe how the military acquisition career field has changed without first telling why. There can't be too many people who don't recall the \$400 toilet seats, the spare parts fiasco, and Operation Ill Wind. The response to these well known problems of defense management is always a loud cry for reform. While there are probably more studies on acquisition reform than people who have read them, I'll show the impetus of the paradigm shift by describing the three major events contributing the most to the change.

- A. The Packard Commission
- B. Defense Management Review
- C. Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act

A. The Packard Commission: In response to an early '80s cry for acquisition reform, the president commissioned David Packard to lead a blue ribbon panel on defense management. The commission published "A Quest For Excellence" in June 1986 outlining steps required to fix defense management. The chief recommendations of the panel were:

- create Defense Acquisition Executive (DAE)
- create Service Acquisition Executives (SAE)
- create Program Executive Officers (PEO)
- establish a professional development program

The Packard Commission created the DAE, better known as the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition), claiming:

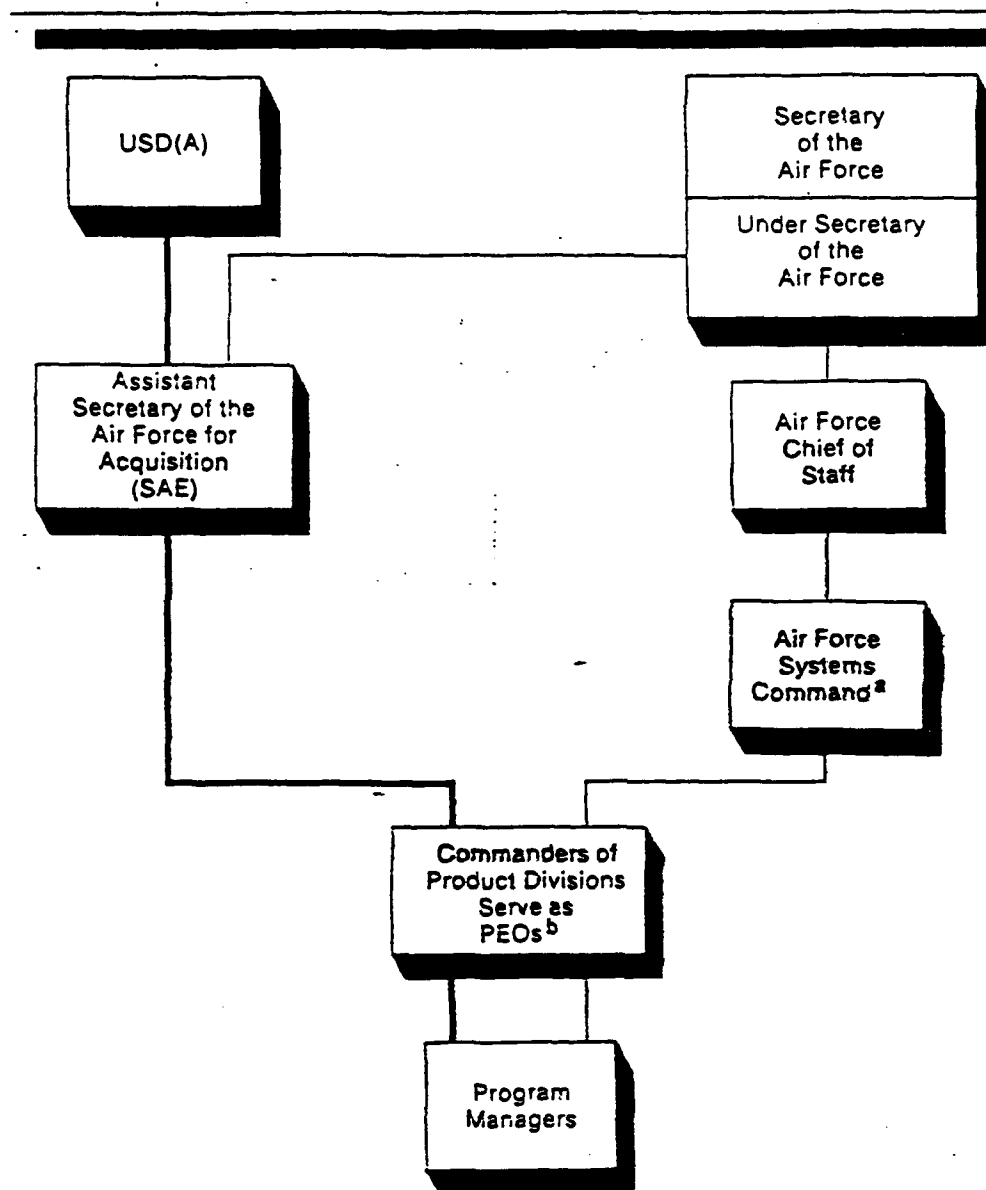
There is today no single senior individual in OSD working full time to provide overall supervision of the acquisition system.¹

They found the same true for all the services, and recommended each create a comparable position to mirror the DAE. The PEO was created to establish "short, unambiguous lines of communication among management levels" and was to be comparable to an industry General Manager, responsible for a portfolio of programs.² The program directors were to report only to the PEO on program matters.

Thus the Packard Commission provided a new chain of command (shown in Figure 1). Notice that the new three tiered information chain did not run through the traditional material command headquarters, effectively taking major service acquisition commands out of the program management business!

The services stepped out smartly implementing these recommendations. For example, the Air Force product division commanders (Aeronautical Systems Division, Space Systems Division, etc.) were "dual-hatted" as PEOs, and the program directors reported only to them on any issue dealing with program management. But with the exception of not taking briefings through Systems Command, not too much changed for the Air Force. The program directors had always briefed the product division commanders. And without belittling these new unambiguous lines of communication, the product division commanders still worked for the AF Systems

FIGURE 1 - POST PACKARD COMMISSION USAF CHAIN OF COMMAND



— Three-tiered information chain.

— Existing chain of command.

^aAir Force Logistics and Communications Commands also serve in this capacity and have a similar relationship to their subordinate commands.

^bAs noted in this chapter, other officials also serve as PEOs. Their information chain is comparable to the AFSC product division commanders'.

command four star!

B. DEFENSE MANAGEMENT REVIEW: Meanwhile back at the Department of Defense, Secretary Cheney's staffers were busy conducting the Defense Management Review (DMR). This review's purpose was to establish a plan to formally implement the Packard Commission recommendations. This review caused significant concern within the acquisition community, sparking rumors of serious personnel cuts and the combination of Air Force Systems and Logistics Commands. When released in the summer of 1989, the DMR contained these major provisions³:

Enhanced DAE Power: The DMR put more power into the hands of the DAE. Through the SAEs, the DAE could direct the service secretaries on all acquisition matters.

Enhanced PEO Power: Probably the most significant change, the PEOs were relieved of all other responsibilities, and authorized a small, separate staff.

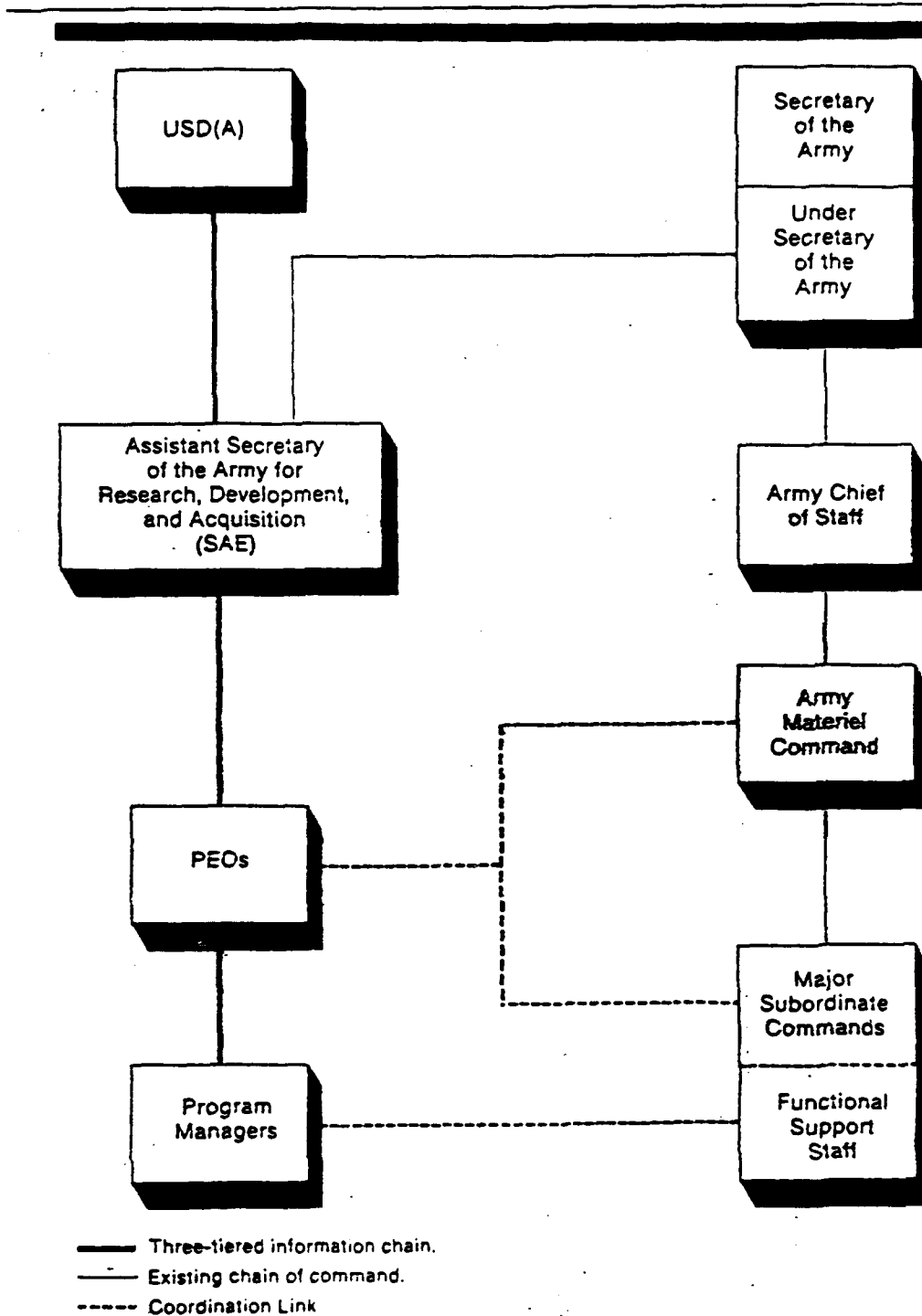
Program Director Selection: The SAE and PEO were given a role in the program director selection process. This was previously the exclusive prerogative of the AFSC commander.

Program Director Tenure: Recommended four year tours for the program director, primarily to enhance program stability.

Acquisition Corps: Called for each service to establish an acquisition corps and provide for special education and training opportunities.

These provisions were now OSD direction, carrying far more weight than the "recommendations" of the Packard Commission. No longer could the product division commanders be dual-hatted. The program director - PEO -SAE chain was now not only outside of the AF Systems Command chain, but outside the local product division chain as well. Figure 2 shows the Army acquisition organization

FIGURE 2 - POST DMR ARMY CHAIN OF COMMAND



following the implementation of the DMR.

Thus, DMR in effect gave the program director two bosses. The PEO for programmatics, and the product division commander for resources. If you've ever been in a job where you tried to serve two bosses, I need not say any more!

Keep in mind that the DMR, an OSD directive, does not carry the authority of public law. The DMR authors did recommend several pieces of legislation, none of which concerned military personnel management. This seems ironic, since the next major event that further shifted the acquisition paradigm was exactly that!

C. DEFENSE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE IMPROVEMENT ACT (DAWIA): While the DMR was OSD's answer to implementing the Packard Commission, several esteemed gentlemen from the legislative branch didn't think The Department of Defense was moving fast enough! So on 5 November 1990, thanks to the efforts of Representative Mavroulis, Congress passed the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). This legislation vaulted congress into the military and civilian personnel management business.

Among other things, DAWIA significantly changed the career path you must take to become a program director. I recommend you read it line by line, but here's a quick synopsis of the major provisions - keep in mind this is public law⁴:

Legislated Acquisition Corps: Formalized acquisition corps and established entry criteria. Entry is at the O-4 level with 10-12 years experience.

Career paths: Directed USD(A) to set specific career paths for each career field shown in Figure 3. Specific education, training, and experience requirements were to be set for each path.

Critical Acquisition Billets: Designated every O-5/GS-14 level job in the acquisition business to be "critical." After October 1993, you cannot be selected for a critical acquisition job unless you are a member of the Corps and meet the detailed education, training, and experience requirements of that position.

Increased Civilianization: Directed OSD to substantially increase the number of civilians in key jobs (program director, deputy, and O-6 department heads) every year through 1997. DAWIA specifically prohibited military preference for any critical acquisition job.

Mandatory Job Tenure: As of October 91, program directors and deputies must stay on job for four years. O-5s filling critical acquisition jobs must stay three years.

Promotion Protection: Similar to what the Goldwater-Nichols Act did for joint officers, DAWIA mandated that acquisition corps officers be promoted at least the same rate as the rest of the line officers.

Detailed Program Director Requirements: DAWIA set specific education, training and experience requirements for program directors. Attendance at the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC), eight years acquisition experience (of which two were in a systems program office), and must sign a commitment to stay in job for the required tenure.

Other Provisions Affecting Program Directors: Among the many other provisions spelled out in DAWIA, here are a few more that will affect you:

- extensive Management Information System required to report to congress on how we're satisfying all these requirements

- established the Defense Acquisition University, and a Senior Acquisition Course which would serve as an equivalent to senior level PME

The critical question of course is what do all these changes mean

FIGURE 3 - ACQUISITION CAREER FIELDS

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

COMMUNICATIONS - COMPUTER SYSTEMS

CONTRACTING

PURCHASING

INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, COST ESTIMATING, BUSINESS

AUDITING

MANUFACTURING AND PRODUCTION

QUALITY ASSURANCE

ACQUISITION LOGISTICS

SYSTEMS PLANNING, RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT & ENGINEERING

TEST & EVALUATION ENGINEERING

if you want to be a program director? Perhaps DOD was slow in implementing the changes recommended by the Packard Commission. Or maybe Congress just didn't like the tenants of the DMR. **Whatever the case, a significant portion of your future career path is now public law, and you'd better read it, know it , and live it if you aspire to the key acquisition jobs!**

Before closing this chapter on the history of the paradigm shift toward legislated career paths, it may seem ironic to quote a passage from the Packard Commission report which initiated the current wave of acquisition reform:

Excellence in defense management will not and can not emerge by legislation or direction. Excellence requires the opposite - responsibility and authority placed firmly in the hands of those at the working level, who have the knowledge and enthusiasm for the tasks at hand.⁵

It is also interesting to recall that the Air Force had already set very strict standards to qualify as a program director in the original Acquisition Professional Development Program. Although the Army and the Navy had not yet followed suit, most believed the Air Force had the correct answer in their quest to professionalize the Acquisition corps. However, when the DAWIA passed, program director requirements were much less stringent - you have to ask yourself what problem were they trying to fix?

II. CURRENT STATUS OF THE MILITARY ACQUISITION CAREER FIELD

The previous chapter on history shows why the military acquisition career paradigm began to shift, plotting the evolution from the Packard Commission through the DMR and ending with the DAWIA legislation. Let's turn now to how it has shifted and what it means to your career plans. I've tried to organize the legislation and current regulation impacts into the following categories:

- A. Increased Constraints On Program Directors
- B. Program Director Selection Procedures
- C. Promotion Potential
- D. The Good News

A. Increased Constraints on Program Directors: While I realize one could write a book on this subject alone, I'll focus on three key aspects critical to future program directors:

- 1. Narrowing Career Path
- 2. Longer Assignments
- 3. More Civilians in Key Positions

1. Narrowing Career Path: As I mentioned, DAWIA set some very specific education, training and experience requirements for program directors. DOD Instruction 5000.58, "Defense Acquisition Workforce, " implements DAWIA, and essentially mimics the provisions of the public law. It even provides a career field description for program management (Appendix 1), as well as one for each of the 14 acquisition career categories. DOD 5000.52-M "Career Development Program for Acquisition Personnel", lays out the specific requirements for each position. Figure 4 highlights the program director requirements.

FIGURE 4 - PROGRAM DIRECTOR REQUIREMENTS

Implementation of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) for

PROGRAM MANAGER (PM) - MAJOR DEFENSE ACQUISITION PROGRAM

PRE-ENACTMENT	OCTOBER 1, 1991	OCTOBER 1, 1992	OCTOBER 1, 1993
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Management Course (PMC) or comparable course as determined by SECDEF. • 8 years acquisition experience, 2 of which were in a procurement command or on the staff of SAE, PEO or PM. • Tenure: 4 years or milestone. <p>Waiver: - Secretary concerned may waive (non-delegable).</p> <p>Note: 10 U.S.C. §1622, on which these standards are based, is repealed as of October 1, 1991.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PMC or comparable course as determined by SECDEF. • 8 years acquisition experience, 2 of which were performed in a systems program office or similar organization. • Tenure: Must stay in job thru completion of milestone closest to 4 years and sign written agreement. • Replacement PM <u>should</u> arrive at the assignment location prior to departure of the reassigned PM. <p>Exception:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person in PM position on October 1, 1991, need not meet the [new] education, training or experience (ET&E) requirements to be allowed to continue to serve in such position. - Acquisition Corps member who does not meet standards may hold job for up to 6 months. <p>Waiver of ET&E and tenure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SAE, or may delegate to the Director of Acquisition Career Management (DACM). 	Same.	<p>Same, & in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position must be filled by Acquisition Corps member. <p>Waiver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SAE, or may delegate to DACM.
§1622	§1734		§1733, §1737

Implementation of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) for

PROGRAM MANAGER - SIGNIFICANT NONMAJOR DEF. ACQUISITION PROGRAM

PRE-ENACTMENT	OCTOBER 1, 1991	OCTOBER 1, 1992	OCTOBER 1, 1993
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PMC or comparable course as determined by SECDEF. • 6 years acquisition experience. • Replacement PM <u>should</u> arrive at the assignment location prior to departure of the reassigned PM. <p>Exception:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Person in PM position on October 1, 1991, need not meet the education, training or experience (ET&E) requirements to be allowed to continue to serve in such position. - Acquisition Corps member who does not meet standards may hold job for up to 6 months. <p>Waiver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SAE, or may delegate to the Director of Acquisition Career Management (DACM). 	Same.	<p>Same, & in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be filled by Acquisition Corps member. • Tenure: Must sign agreement to stay in job 3 years. <p>Waiver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SAE, or may delegate to DACM.
	§1734-37	§	§1733, 34, & 37

Add this list of things you must do to be competitive for a program director job with the things you must do to be a competitive for promotion in your service and you'll find a narrow path indeed! DSMC, Intermediate Service School, Senior Service School, Master's degree, acquisition experience, and a three year critical acquisition job as a Lt Col/Commander, are the ones that immediately come to mind. It is clear it's possible to do all these things. But a good question is can you do all these things and support an operational career as well? With the new constraints, can you meet your operational requirements (eg. flying gates) and check all these acquisition "boxes" as well?

The message is clear: Know these constraints and pick a darn good critical acquisition job as an O-5, because you will only have time for one!

2. Longer Assignments: As far back as the Packard Commission, there was an appeal for program stability. A central point in this appeal was the program director's length of tour. In the mid to late 1980's, it was rare to see a program director stay in the same job for more than a couple of years. Under DAWIA, the rules have changed! As of October 1991, program directors and their deputies must stay for four years or until the milestone closest to the four year point, and the law requires you to "execute a written agreement to remain in the position for this time period." DOD

5000.58 provides the following rational for waivers to this tenure⁶:

- you can retire
- you can get fired
- you can get promoted

Let's face it - this is perhaps the worst time in systems acquisition history to try and enforce a mandatory tour length. With the DOD trying to downsize, offering early retirements and conducting annual SERBs, it will be some time before the services can come close to meeting this requirement.

As aide to the AF Systems Command commander, one of the more interesting things I learned was how the senior O-6 assignment process really works. I watched as General Randolph manipulated senior O-6 assignments to insure their competitiveness for promotion to general officer. To be competitive, you usually had to have two "big jobs." For example, you might have been a major program director and a wing commander, or have successfully commanded two different major System Program Offices (SPOs).

In a blazing moment of common sense, the FY1993 authorization bill (PL 102-484) did waive the minimum assignment period for deputy program directors if the follow-on assignment was also a critical acquisition position. It would have been hard indeed to find military colonels/captains willing to lock themselves into a number two job for four years!

The longer assignment statutory requirement of DAWIA throws a curve

ball to the senior officer assignment process. You may not have time for two big jobs. The message here is when it's your turn to take over a major program, you'd better make sure its a high visibility one if you have aspirations for future promotions! On the other hand, I've moved seven times in 13 years - the thought of a four year assignment is quite appealing!

3. More Civilians in Key Positions: At one point in the synthesis of the Mavroulis legislation, rumor had it the goal was to civilianize the acquisition corps. Perhaps the congressional staffers were alarmed when they looked at the ratio of civilian to military program directors in the summer of 1990. Figure 5 shows the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) data as of May 1990⁷. Assuming Figure 5 is the baseline, the law distinctly says:

The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the acquisition workforce is managed such that, for each fiscal year from October 1, 1991, through September 30, 1996, there is a substantial increase in the proportion of civilians (as compared to armed forces personnel) serving in critical acquisition positions in general, in program manager positions, and in division head positions over the proportion of civilians (as compared to armed forces personnel) in such positions on Oct 30 1990.

Figure 6 shows the current mix of program directors. It is too early to draw any meaningful conclusions from this data other than to note Congress will be watching . . . !

The push for additional civilians in key jobs brings up several interesting points. First, coupled with program cancellations due to the general defense budget drawdown, increasing civilians in

FIGURE 5 - CIVILIAN/MILITARY PROGRAM DIRECTOR MIX (1988)

Proportion of Civilian and Military Program Managers

		Major Programs		Non-Major Programs		Totals	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Army	Mil	27	96	100	78	127	81
	Civ	1	4	28	22	29	19
Navy	Mil	35	95	47	94	82	94
	Civ	2	5	3	6	5	6
Air Force	Mil	28	97	.	.	.	.
	Civ	1	3	.	.	.	.
Total	Mil	90	96	147	83	237	87
	Civ	4	4	31	17	35	13
Grand Total	Mil	94		178 (370)*		272 (464)*	

*The AF has 192 non-major programs but was unable to provide a split of military and civilian at the time of publication of report. This data was taken from Investigations Subcommittee, HASC, Report No. 10, May 8, 1990. Data in the report was provided to the subcommittee by the services and is therefore somewhat dated.

FIGURE 6 - CIVILIAN/MILITARY PROGRAM DIRECTOR MIX (1992)

Comparison of Civilians (Civ.) and Military (Mil.) Program Manager and Deputy Program Manager Positions								
Position	Army		Navy		Air Force		DOD	
	MIL.	Civ.	MIL.	Civ.	MIL.	Civ.	MIL.	Civ.
Major programs								
Program managers	43	0	49	9	27	2	3	2
Deputy program managers	2	41	14	44	.	.	1	0
Total	45	41	63	53	.	.	4	2
Significant nonmajor programs								
Program managers	19	1	54	8	42	7	.	.
Deputy program managers	1	17	10	53	.	.	.	.
Total	20	18	64	61	.	.	.	.

*Not available

program director slots will decrease an already declining opportunity for active duty military officers. Second, coupled with the statutory requirement for four year assignments for the incumbent program directors, it's probably mathematically impossible to show substantial annual progress to meeting congressional expectations if no one is moving?!

There are also specific words in DAWIA prohibiting a preference for active duty military officers over civilians in key acquisition billets. Each "military only" position description must be accompanied by sufficient justification.

In my view from the bottom, these portions of the DAWIA legislation are idiotic. The central issue is NOT military or civilian, but best qualified. Even the GAO reported:

We reported in May 1986, that the prevailing view among selected program office personnel, acquisition management personnel, and outside experts, was that the best qualified personnel - military or civilian - should be selected to fill program manager positions. This view was also recently expressed by DOD policy officials responsible for implementing the act.⁸

Any quota system for civilians or military in key acquisition jobs is guaranteed to sub-optimize the task of "professionalizing" the acquisition corps. Perhaps we should require all program directors to have a golf handicap of ten or less. . . or perhaps they should all be qualified scuba divers? Either of these proposals seem as logical as requiring an arbitrary civilian/military ratio in certain types of jobs!

B. Program Director Selection Procedures: If you've successfully navigated the legislation infested waters described above, and find yourself at the O-6 level looking for one of those plum program director jobs, how do you get picked? If this was pre-DMR, pre-DAWIA, my answer would be "by the grace of the four star AFSC commander!" Having been the fly on the wall of the infamous AFSC "blue room" during most program director selections from 1988-1990, I can provide first hand testimony to this fact! General Randolph personally worked each assignment, sometimes taking inputs from his staff, sometimes rejecting their council. Let's investigate:

1. what the law says
2. how the system works now

1. What the Law Says: Let's look at the current direction concerning this career limiting activity. DAWIA says:

The Secretary of each military department, acting through the SAE is responsible for making assignments of civilian and military members of the acquisition corps to critical acquisition positions.⁹

DOD Directive 5000.52, "Defense Acquisition Education, Training, and Career Development Program," reiterates this responsibility and goes on to say:

If they [Service Secretaries] delegate their respective authorities under this directive, delegate them only to the Service Acquisition Executive of their military department.¹⁰

Finally, there's one more piece of guidance concerning program director selection contained in DOD Instruction 5000.58. The Defense Acquisition Workforce Instruction directs:

Heads of DOD Components shall consult with the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition) prior to the appointment or

reassignment of PEOs and Program Managers of programs subject to review by the Defense Acquisition Board.¹¹

If the above really happened, you would certainly be lucky to get all these high level defense acquisition executives kicking your name around! However, you have to wonder how the commander of Air Combat Command or CINCPACCOM would react if they had this many restrictions on their prerogative of selecting wing commanders and aircraft carrier captains..... Are senior systems acquisition jobs so different they need all this additional help from the service secretariat and OSD? While many program directors do have the authority to commit the government to spend money, many operational wing and brigade commanders have the responsibility to unleash nuclear weapons. . . . !

2. How the System Works Now: For example, let's examine how the Air Force does it. If an Air Force PEO program director's job opens up, the senior officer personnel shop at Air Force Material Command assembles a list of possible candidates. This list could be driven by specific requests from the PEO, product center commander recommendations, or headquarters general officer inputs. This list is then forwarded through the headquarters, center commander, PEO, SAE, and presented to the AFMC commander for approval.¹²

On the surface, this doesn't appear to be very different from the old system. However, several important differences are worth highlighting. First, the SAE and the PEO can now significantly

influence the personnel decisions. Second, as we saw in the previous section, the USD(A)'s shop coordinates on the decision.

The significance of program director selection is obviously future promotability. Most acquisition general/flag officers have been major program directors. Commanders of the major acquisition commands (eg. AFMC, AMC) are responsible for the professional development and future promotability of their troops. They have typically grown up in the command and get advice from other generals and senior civilians who have also spent a career in the command and know how to identify the top performers. The PEOs are responsible for program management of current programs. If they're spending a lot of time on personnel management, they should probably re-read the DMR. The SAE and USD(A) are political appointees, who are no doubt highly qualified for their positions, but may or may not know the nuances of the military promotion system. So who should really be involved in the program director decision...you make the call?!

C. Promotion Potential: The key question in any career field is can I get promoted? With the continuing drawdown of the military personnel, Selective Early Retirement Boards are convening annually, promotion rates to O-4, O-5, and O-6 have decreased five percent, making it increasingly competitive to stay in the military let alone be promoted. The two issues I'll discuss regarding

promotability are:

1. Legal Requirements
2. Who's the Boss?

1. Legal Requirements: Section 1731(b) of the DAWIA states:

The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the qualifications of commissioned officers selected for an Acquisition Corps are such that those officers are expected, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than the rate for all line (or the equivalent) officers in the same grade¹³

In addition, the law also requires the Secretary of Defense to report annually on the promotion statistics of the acquisition corps compared to the line officers, while admonishing:

If the promotion rates fail to meet the objective of section 1731(b), the Secretary of Defense shall notify Congress of such failures and of what actions the Secretary has taken or plans to take in reaction to such failures.¹⁴

You'll notice this legislation is similar to the Goldwater- Nichols Act provision to protect those officers serving joint duty. There is a well circulated rumor that General Powell rejected the Army's O-6 list in the fall of 1992 due to the lack of joint duty officers on the promotion list. If this is any indication of things to come, you can bet the services will meet this requirement! Figure 7 shows the Army, Navy, and Air Force promotion statistics for 1992. The services are more or less meeting the spirit of the legislation, but it is really too early to predict any trends.

2. Who's the Boss?: In all the service's officer evaluation systems, the immediate supervisor is the key. Through direct

COMPONENT: ARMY

FIGURE 7 - PROMOTION RATES

To Grade	Categories	Screened in Zone	Promoted in Zone	Promotion Rates	
				In Zone	Below Zone
0-8	Acquisition Corps	9	1	11%	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers*	87	28	32%	N/A
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers	96	29	30%	N/A
0-7	Acquisition Corps	145	3	2%	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers*	1078	38	2%	N/A
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers	2123	41	2%	N/A
0-6	Acquisition Corps	61	34	56%	6%
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers*	903	384	44%	2%
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers	964	428	44%	2%
0-5	Acquisition Corps	124	86	77%	2%
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers*	1704	1068	82%	5%
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers	1828	1151	63%	5%

Source: Service Selection Board Results

'Army PERSCOM Officer Personnel Management Directorate • Managed Officers

**OFFICER PROMOTION RATE COMPARISONS FY 1992
COMPONENT: AIR FORCE**

To Grade	Categories	Screened in Zone	Promoted in Zone	Promotion Rates	
				In Zone	Below Zone ^a
0-8 ^a	Acquisition Corps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers ^b	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
0-7	Acquisition Corps	235	3	1%	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers ^b	2663	36	1%	N/A
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers	2898	39	1%	N/A
0-6 ^a	Acquisition Corps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers ^b	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
0-5 ^a	Acquisition Corps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers ^b	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent/Line Officers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

County: Santa Cruz

3. Results of the FY 1992 O & selection board not yet released

* All officers with the exception of the following professions and trades were at Camp or Camp Medical Corps.

Genital Cysts, Blomfield Salvage Corps Chapter (1975) and a large new Corps (1982).

COMPONENT: NAVY

To Grade	Categories	Screened in Zone	Promoted in Zone	Promotion Rates	
				In Zone	Below Zone ^a
0-8	Acquisition Corps ^a	10	4	40%	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent Line Officers ^b	39	19	49%	N/A
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent Line Officers	49	23	47%	N/A
0-7	Acquisition Corps ^a	260	7	3%	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent Line Officers ^b	1053	23	2%	N/A
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent Line Officers	1313	30	2%	N/A
0-6	Acquisition Corps ^a	109	59	54%	5%
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent Line Officers ^b	727	371	51%	1%
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent Line Officers	836	430	51%	1%
0-5	Acquisition Corps ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Non-Acquisition Equivalent Line Officers ^b	1265	863	68%	5%
	TOTAL: Acquisition and Non-Acquisition Equivalent Line Officers	1265	863	68%	5%

Source: Service Selection Board Press

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1992. **Marine Corps acquisition personnel requirements not available for FY 1992.**

supervision, your immediate boss is able to fairly evaluate your performance and rank order your performance relative to your peers. The current implementation of the PEO system poses an interesting dilemma for program director promotions.

For example, assume you're a program director of a PEO program at a major product center. As we've already discussed, you have two bosses! On one hand, the PEO is your boss and ultimately writes your promotion recommendation. By law, you report to the PEO and only the PEO for program cost, schedule and technical issues. And on these three issues, the PEO is certainly in a great position to judge you relative to the other half dozen program directors in his portfolio of programs.

On the other hand, you live with a three star product center commander who controls all of your resources. Although you report to the PEO, the promotion chain of all your troops goes through the local commander. In addition, the local commander is in a much better position to directly observe all the non-programmatic aspects of senior officer performance, such as how you take care of your troops, unit esprit de corps, infrastructure improvement, and other quality of life issues so vital to a military unit.

So when the promotion recommendations are made, the PEO program directors are rank ordered at the PEO/SAE level while the program directors of the significant non-major programs are evaluated by

- the product center and AFMC commanders. It is too early to assemble any meaningful statistics to determine whether one group has an advantage over the other, but it is a by product of dual chains of command and a nuance you should be aware of!

D. The Good News: There are a few ponies in the new acquisition legislation. First, DAWIA authorizes a bonus for extended active duty. If you are eligible to retire and execute the mandatory tenure agreement in your critical acquisition billet, you can receive a bonus! The bonus can be up to fifteen per cent of your base pay, payable in lump sum or installments.¹⁵

DAWIA also temporarily authorizes hiring retired military officers into civil service without the normal financial penalties on regular officer retirement pay. The law authorizes the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to waive the financial penalty on a case by case basis for "employees in positions where there is exceptional difficulty in recruiting or retaining a qualified employee."

The only question is how extensively these provisions are likely to be used in a declining Defense Department environment. With selective early retirement boards decimating the ranks of the senior military officers, the "bonus" may be extended active duty! And elementary math skills say a civilian early retirement program or reduction in force in the near future is highly likely, making

hard to fill positions hard to believe! For example, the January 1993 OSD report on DAWIA implementation said the following concerning the bonus program:

The Service Secretaries reviewed the potential need for a retention bonus program in FY1992. Based on this review, it was determined that a monetary bonus program to retain officers in critical acquisition positions was not needed in FY92. Therefore, the Service Secretaries did not request approval from the Secretary of Defense to exercise this authority.¹⁶

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE MILITARY PROGRAM DIRECTORS

I've provided a historical discussion of why the acquisition career field changed, and details of how the path to program director has changed. So what does it all mean to you? I suppose you have two options. One, you could read this assessment of the acquisition career field and decide to run, not walk to the nearest other career field that has nothing to do with programs, PEO's or procurement. Or two, you could take the time to understand all these new idiosyncracies of acquisition and work to improve the career field responsible for America's future national survival.

For those of you who choose to stay, this chapter will outline the major future trends likely to complete the acquisition career field paradigm shift. I hope to convey the thought that the acquisition career field remains a viable career option for military officers!

There is always danger of looking into the crystal ball trying to predict the future, and increased peril if you write down what you see. Please recognize that my observations are colored by my limited experience, naivety, and relentless optimism. Recall from the introduction, however, that this is a view from the bottom and likely to be closer to the perceptions of the rank and file acquisition community than the academics, pundits, and congressional staffers that dominate the popular print media!

The three major areas I think will have future impact on program

directors are:

- A. Effects of the defense drawdown
- B. Increased career specialization
- C. Senior Acquisition Course requirement

A. Effects of the Defense Drawdown: There are few in the defense department that haven't been touched by some aspect of declining military budgets. The past few years have been marked by major program cancellations, early retirements, and forced separations of active duty military personnel. Without the clear and present danger of nuclear holocaust hanging over our heads, these downward trends will likely continue. The difference in the future will be that we've done all the easy things to reduce personnel and budgets. . . .the next cut will hurt more.

The next round of reductions will focus on the tooth to tail ratio of the active duty military. If the reductions reach so deep they cause a tooth to tail confrontation where combat effectiveness is at stake, the tooth (operational combat forces) will eat the tail (logistics, acquisition). And so enter the discussion of consolidating all the service acquisition functions into a single defense agency.

A **Defense Acquisition Corps** is certainly not a new idea. The original DAWIA deliberations were headed in that direction. Several other congressmen (eg. Boxer, Roth) have proposed forming an all civilian corps modeled after European defense procurement agencies such as France. In the mid 1980's, even the Assistant

Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Logistics) proposed creating a Defense Acquisition Corps modeled after the State Department's Foreign Service.¹⁷ The DAWIA legislation itself calls for significantly increasing the number of senior civilians in key positions throughout the acquisition community. Ms. Colleen Preston, General Counsel for the House Armed Services Committee, explained that the sense of Congress was NOT to make a civilian acquisition corps, but rather a professional career field similar to the legal or accounting professions.

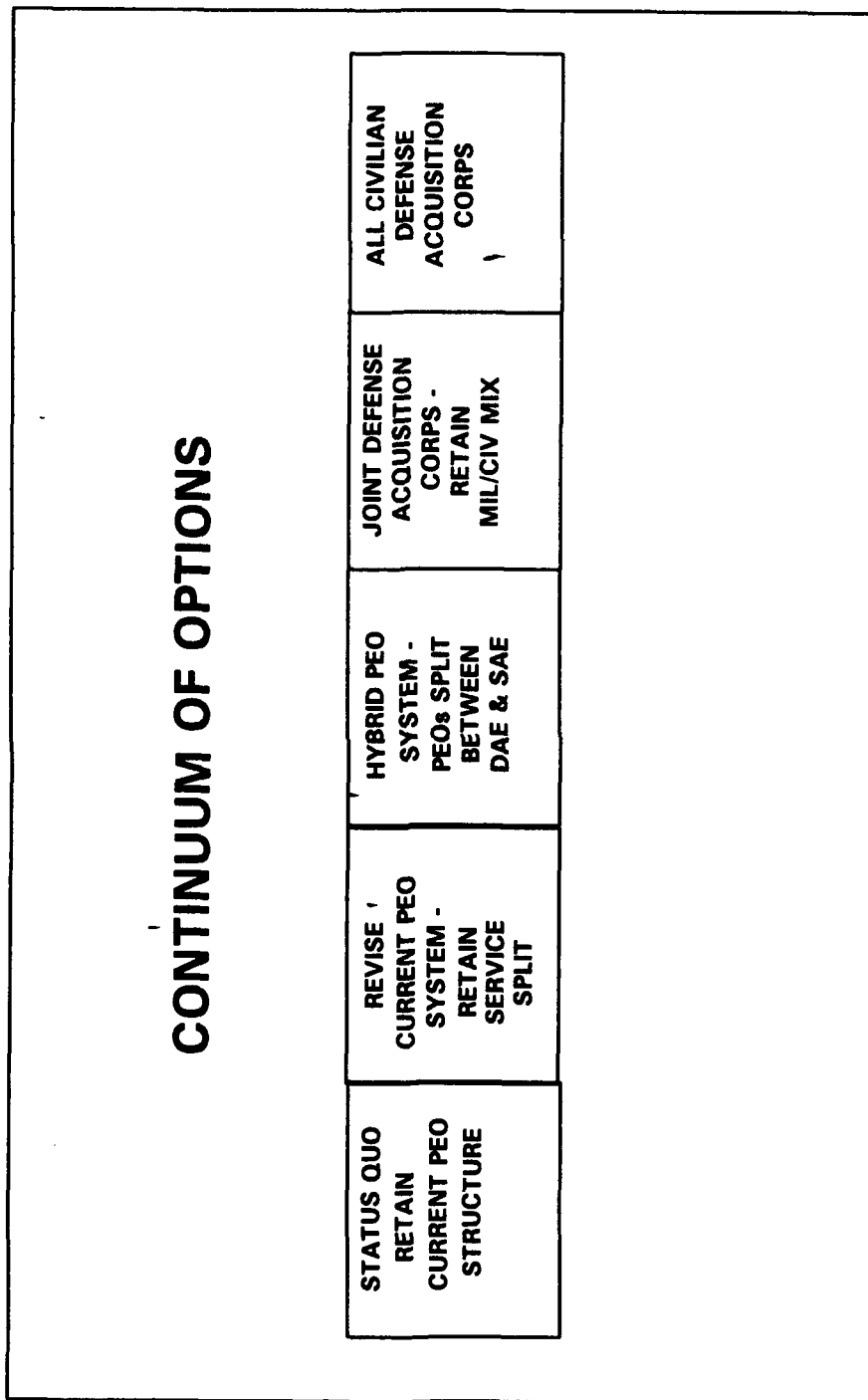
Will systems acquisition be consolidated into a Defense Acquisition Corps in your career lifetime? Figure 8 shows a continuum of degrees of consolidation of acquisition functions ranging from the status quo to forming an all civilian Defense Acquisition Corps. Keeping the status quo is unlikely since we currently have a Reagan era organization for a Clinton era budget. Clearly the dwindling number of major programs will not support the current management overhead. Likewise, moving to an all civilian workforce is equally unlikely for the following reasons:

- the talent drain of military acquisition professionals
- no operational experience within the acquisition career
- would cause major rift between operators and acquirers
- military has greater credibility in user commands
- more difficult to geographically relocate civilians
- easier to fire military officers for performance
- military officers more willing to travel aggressively
- military officers more willing to work extended hours

The Packard Commission looked at the idea of one consolidated acquisition function for all the services. They reported:

The Commission considered consolidating all Defense

FIGURE 8 - CONSOLIDATING ACQUISITION FUNCTIONS



Acquisition activities under the DAE, but concluded such centralization would not serve the case of reducing bureaucracy because it would tend to separate further the acquisition staff from the military user.¹⁸

The real future probably lies somewhere between revamping the current PEO structure and a Joint Acquisition Corps. Some degree of consolidation within each service will occur naturally as the number of programs decrease.

A larger change would be required to implement a Joint Acquisition Corps. The idea here is to have a number of PEOs at the DOD level rather than the Service level organized around the roles and missions likely to evolve as Secretary Aspin puts his spin on the defense department.

Do not doubt that change is in the air! It has been almost four years since the last major acquisition shakeup, an unusually long time in modern history to leave our career field untouched. With the new administration, count on renewed cry for "acquisition reform!"

At the same time, do not doubt there is a place for military program directors in the new system regardless of what organizational changes are made. Just consider the acquisition talent at the O-4 and O-5 levels in your service - it would take ten years to replace this experience base these future program directors bring to the table! In addition, don't forget what

Secretary Cheney said in the Defense Management Review:

The need for military specialists to manage the acquisition process is now greater than ever, and will only grow over time.¹⁹

B. Increased Specialization: The Packard Commission, DMR, and the DAWIA had the common goal of increasing the professionalism, education, and training of the acquisition corps. As I pointed out in Chapter II, attaining this goal meant a lengthy set of requirements for education, training and experience for program directors. An unplanned side effect of these requirements will be an unprecedented specialization within the military!

The military career has always emphasized the whole person concept, usually driving the average officer to seek a variety of assignments throughout his or her career. The new program director requirements now dictate that you specialize in acquisition almost from the start of your career. Certainly you can enter the acquisition corps as a Major/Lt Commander from the operational world. However, you'll compete for the key jobs against folks who have been in the acquisition business for 10 - 12 years. The Defense Management Review highlighted this dilemma:

It must be recognized that attainment by the military officer of equal competence for senior field grade and higher assignments in both the operational and acquisition arenas is increasingly difficult and for many purposes, impossible.²⁰

In deciding for yourself whether this is good or bad, consider the

following example. If you're conducting the air campaign in the Persian Gulf, do you want an F-16 squadron commander who's had a four year tour in the acquisition business, or one who spent the last four years at the Fighter Weapons School? Likewise, if you're negotiating a multi billion dollar contract with the seasoned industry veterans, do you want the guy who's spent eight years in the cockpit, or eight years developing negotiation positions in the acquisition trenches?

I believe we're moving into an era where the key senior program directors will almost exclusively come from the ranks of career acquisition specialists. While we're all aware of the virtues of operational experience within the program office, too much operational time will, by law, preclude some from attaining senior acquisition positions. The legislated requirements of DAWIA infer that while operational folks transferring into acquisition late in their careers will be important advisors to the program offices, they will not be the boss.

C. Senior Acquisition Course: The DAWIA established the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) to institutionalize acquisition education. Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) is the intermediate level, and beginning this year, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) is the senior level. The concept is that a subset of ICAF students will also be Senior Acquisition Course students. They will take extra classes focusing on

- acquisition policy and current issues.

The idea behind the Senior Acquisition Course is great. Anyone who's been to DSMC knows the advantages of gaining the perspectives from acquisition professionals from other services and agencies. It's true there is no requirement for attendance at this course to be a program director, PEO, or acquisition general officer. However, it's also true there is no requirement to attend senior level PME to be a general officer. . . .yet most have attended!

Will completion of the Senior Acquisition Course be a future discriminator used to select officers for top jobs? Considering the analogy of senior level PME, I'd have to guess probably yes! The message here is if you've set your sights on being a senior leader in systems acquisition, stay competitive enough to go to ICAF as a senior acquisition course student just in case!

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I've discussed why and how the military acquisition career paradigm has shifted. I also provided a glimpse of a few future trends likely to be a part of the new paradigm. If you take nothing else away from reading this paper, remember the following points:

1. The career path to major program director is narrowing - make sure you know all the requirements.
2. Your assignments along that career path will be longer - make sure you pick good ones.
3. Recognize your two chains of command and their effect on your promotions, and realize the promotion rate is protected by law.
4. If you're lucky enough to be selected for senior PME, volunteer for ICAF and compete to be one of the Senior Acquisition Course students.
5. Recognize the congressional predisposition to consolidate the acquisition corps, and be able to eloquently articulate the virtues of selecting program directors on a "best qualified" basis.
6. Watch for new efforts to reorganize the defense acquisition community, paying close attention to the new roles and missions for the services.
7. Pay attention to the program director selection procedures for your service - it's likely to be driven by the personalities of your service's key acquisition leaders.

For a final note, let's return to the original motivation for this paper and answer the question "why should you stay in a career field that seems so complicated, has a myriad of boxes to check,

and may be on the verge of converting to an all civilian workforce?" Consider for a moment the three most militarily significant events in the last few years - the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the break up of the Soviet Union, and victory in the Persian Gulf. While many leaders exalt the advantages of combined and joint warfare to explain our good fortune, the only common aspect to these three victories is technology. That enabling technology came from men and women, military and civilian, of the defense acquisition workforce. And more often than not, the programs that put the rubber on the ramp, the cruise missiles on target, the tank rounds on their mark were led by military program directors.

What sets the program directors apart is leadership, and the military teaches leadership, rewards leadership, and demands leadership. Those who can't lead are not promoted. This is not to say that civilians can't lead, for I personally know many senior civilians very capable of running major programs. But leadership is part of the military culture, and any attempt in the future to remove the military leadership from the defense industrial base would create an awesome leadership vacuum - and the suction from this vacuum would likely close the doors of a significant portion of American industry. You should stay in the career field to prevent these doors from closing!

Is there a future for military program directors? Yes, not only is

there a future, but there's a national security requirement for our country's top military talent to turn research and development innovations into high technology systems to defend our national interests. Yes, the list of bureaucratic requirements on program directors will grow - yes, the number of programs will decrease - and yes, the number of personnel in the program offices will plummet dramatically. All these factors put increased pressure on those that remain to do today's big jobs with tomorrow's small workforce. . Coping with this increased pressure demands unparalleled leadership skills. Military officers have a competitive advantage in the leadership department. Use your competitive advantage to keep our country strong. You never know - maybe the program you lead will be responsible for bringing down the next Berlin Wall.

NOTES

1. "A Quest for Excellence", Final Report of the Packard Commission, Jun 1986, p. xii.

2. Ibid.

3. Defense Management Review (DMR), Richard Cheney, Jun 89, p. 8 - 15.

4. Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), Public Law PL101-433, 5 Nov 90.

5. "A Quest for Excellence," Final Report of the Packard Commission, Jun 86, p. xxii.

6. DODI 5000.58, "Defense Acquisition Workforce," 14 Jan 92, p. 23.

7. "DAWIA: What is it and Where is it today," Arthur Santo-Donato, p. 6.

8. GAO/NSIAD 92-97, Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act, Jan 1992, p. 7.

9. DAWIA, section 1734(h).

10. DODD 5000.52, "Defense Acquisition Education, Training, and Career Development," 25 Oct 91, p. 9.

11. DODI 5000.58, "Defense Acquisition Workforce," 14 Jan 92, p. 4.

12. Telecon with Senior Officer Personnel shop, Air Force Material Command, Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

13. DAWIA, section 1731(b).

14. Ibid., Section 1762(c)(4)(C).

15. Ibid., section 1203.

16. Report from the Secretary of Defense to the President and the Congress, January 1993.

17. "A Quest for Excellence", Packard Commission Final Report, p. 67.

18. Ibid., p. 54.

19. DMR, p. 13.

20.Ibid., p. 14.

Jan 14, 92
5000.58 (Encl 3)

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
DESCRIPTION

A. DUTIES

1. The PM is the central position in the Program Management Functional Area. A PM is responsible for the optimum mix of cost, schedule, performance, and system supportability throughout the life cycle (design, development, T&E, production, modification, and disposition) of the program. The PM has responsibility for one or more acquisition programs. Program management includes other positions that directly or indirectly assist the PM in fulfilling those responsibilities that implement the policies and procedures in DoD Directive 5000.1, DoD Instruction 5000.2, and DoD 5000.2-M (references (n), (o), and (u)).

2. CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONAL SERIES AND MILITARY SPECIALTY CODES THAT FREQUENTLY INCLUDE THE DUTIES DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION A.1., ABOVE:

a. Civilian Occ Series. 0340,* 301, 334, 343, 391, 0560, 08XX, 1101, and 1515.

b. Army AOC. 15C35, 51, 53C, and 97.

c. Navy NOBC. 2161, 2162, 2163, 2165, 2170, and 6717.

c. USAF AFSC. 27XX, 28XX, 0029, 31XX, 40XX, 0046, 49XX, 60XX, 64XX, and 66XX.

d. USMC MOS. 9656.

B. WHERE PERFORMED

1. Program management positions can be either line or staff.

a. Line program management positions include the following:

- (1) The Acquisition Executives.
- (2) The PEOs.
- (3) The Deputy PEOs.
- (4) The PMs and/or Direct Reporting PMs (DRPM).
- (5) The Deputy PMs and/or Deputy DRPM.

b. Staff program management positions include the following:

- (1) Designated position on the Acquisition Commander's Staff.

- (2) The Assistant PM positions.
- (3) The Designated personnel on the PEO's or Program Manager's staff.
- (4) The Program Analysts.

2. Program management may also be present in laboratories.

* The 0340 Civilian Occupation Series in an Acquisition Organization is normally acquisition program management.